

The Fox and Ojibwa War.

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It has been mentioned that those left in charge of the fort at Mankahto by Le Sueur , returned to Montreal on account of the hostility of the Indians. About this period the Sauks and Foxes, who used to hunt as far north as the Sauk Rapids, though their principal residence was on the Fox River, in Wisconsin, formed an alliance and waged war against the Ojibwas and Illinois, who were the allies of the French. As a consequence, the Wisconsin for many years ceased to be an avenue of trade to the Mississippi.

In 1726 a proposition was made by the French commandant at the post on the Illinois, to the officer at Green Bay to exterminate the Foxes. In reply to the proposition the latter says: "We agree that that would be the best expedient, but must maintain that nothing can be more dangerous in case it should fail. It would be necessary to effect a surprise and to keep them shut up in the fort as in the last war, for if the Foxes escape to the Sioux, or the Ayouais (Ioways) they would return to destroy us in all the upper country."*

* Wisconsin Hist. See. Report, Page 22.

It was during the interval referred to in this chapter, that the Ojibwa incursions into Minnesota took place. Aided by French firearms and advice, the Ojibwas advanced by way of the St. Louis River. Under Bi-ous-wah , they drove the Dakotas from their village, and from this point they commenced a warfare, which in time led to the retirement of the Dakotas from Leech, Mille Lacs, and other strongholds north of the Falls of Saint Anthony, and west of Lake Superior.

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Very near the period that France ceded Canada to England, the last conflict of the Foxes and Ojibwas took place at the falls of the Saint Croix. The late Anglo-ojibwa, Wm. W. Warren , says:

The account which the Ojibwas give of this battle is, that a famous war chief of Lake Superior, whose name was Waub-o-jeeg , or "White Fisher," sent his war club and wampum of war to call the scattered bands of the Ojibwa tribes, to collect a war party to march against the Sioux villages on the St. Croix and Mississippi. Warriors from Ste. Maries, Kewenaw, Wisconsin and Grand Portage joined his party, and with three hundred warriors, Waub-o-jeeg started from Lapointe to march into the enemy's country. He had sent his war club to the village of Sandy Lake, and they had sent tobacco in return, with answer that on a certain day, sixty men from that section of the Ojibwa tribe would meet him at the confluence of Snake River with the St. Croix. On reaching this point on the day designated, and the Sandy Lake party not having arrived as agreed upon, Waub-o-jeeg , not confident in the strength of his numbers, continued down the St. Croix. They arrived at the Falls of St. Croix early in the morning, and while preparing to take their bark canoes over the portage, or carrying place, scouts were sent in advance to reconnoitre. They soon returned with the information that they had discovered a large party of Sioux and Foxes landing at the other end of the portage.

The Ojibwas instantly prepared for battle, and the scouts of the enemy having discovered them, the two hostile parties met as if by mutual appointment, in the middle of the portage. The Foxes after seeing the comparatively small number of the Ojibwas, and over confident in their own superior numbers and prowess, requested the Sioux not to join in the fight, but to sit by and see how quickly they 347 could rout the Ojibwas. This request was granted. The fight between the contending warriors of the two tribes, is said to have been fiercely contested, and embellished with many daring acts of personal valor. About noon the Foxes commenced yielding ground, and at last were forced to flee in confusion. They would probably have been driven into the river and killed to a man, had not their allies the Sioux,

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who had been quietly smoking their pipes and calmly viewing the fight from a distance, at this juncture, yelled their war whoop, and rushed to the rescue of their discomfited friends.

The Ojibwas resisted their new enemies manfully, and it was not until their ammunition had entirely failed that they in turn showed their backs in flight. Few would have returned to their lodges to tell the sad tale of defeat, and death of brave men, had not the party of sixty warriors from Sandy Lake, who were to have joined them at the mouth of Snake River, arrived at this opportune moment, and landed at the head of the portage.

Eager for the fight and fresh on the field, this band withstood the onset of the Sioux and Foxes, till their retreating friends could rally again to the battle. The Sioux and Foxes in turn fled, and it is said that the slaughter in their ranks was great. Many were driven over the rocks into the boiling flood below and every crevice in the cliffs contained a dead or wounded enemy.

From this time the Foxes retired to the south, and forever gave up the war with their victorious enemies.

The old Ojibwa Chief, Buffalo , of Lapointe, says that the fires of the Foxes was by this stroke nearly extinguished, and they were reduced to fifteen lodges. They placed themselves under the protection of the Osaukies, who are a family of the Algonquin stock, and offering to be their cutters of wood and carriers of water, were at last incorporated into 348 that tribe. The Foxes speak a distinct language and do not belong to the Algonquin Council Fires. The Ojibwas term them, *O-dug-aum-eeeg* , or “people of the opposite side.”

The Foxes being at last dislodged from the Fox River, French traders began to come from Mackinaw to the Mississippi, by way of Green Bay.

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In the year 1755, a French fort for the first time was established at Prairie du Chien, and drew around it a number of voyageurs and coureurs des bois, whose descendants are found in Minnesota.